

My name is Teresa Severy and I am serving my second term as President of the Michigan School Counselor Association. My terms of office have been almost 10 years apart yet I am hearing similar calls for action in support of students in Michigan and yet the responses to that cry have been met with a similar, clear message...silence and shrugs and limited or no action. School counselors are well and appropriately trained for the work they do. They have completed the appropriate university course work, been granted at least a Master's degree in counseling, and added to their skill toolbox through planned professional development. The hours they work get longer and longer for them to do their job. The line of young people waiting to see them continues to swell. It is never any counselors' desire to let social, emotional, or academic needs go unmet, unaddressed, or incomplete. Rather counselors just work harder and more efficiently, come in earlier, skip lunches, and stay later to do what is right for not only the students they serve but also the people who support them.

I am an elementary counselor, one of the dwindling number available to elementary school students in our state. I consider myself fortunate to have gone from a caseload of 1200 plus students in 3 schools to 430 5th and 6th graders in one school. Progress? Perhaps. I love where I work but the lower elementary ratio continues to be about the same. We have one person available to 2 elementary schools and a counselor from another building assigned to the kindergarten center for one day a week. It isn't the best but my colleagues do their best to make it work. It certainly could be better! We have lost counselors both at the elementary and junior high level. What the counselors do is a great and wonderful job that is stressful, fun, focused, and infinite. Every day. Start early and end late. As the only counselor in my building, I teach school counseling lessons, run groups, address academic needs, meet with parents, serve on a crisis, student support, and and leadership team, and do my best to be certain that social and emotional needs are met. This is the first time in my career that I have not handled state testing. My principal appreciates my work as a school counselor and knows that testing is not a school counseling responsibility. Do I help out with issues not counseling related? Of course I do. All staff do their best in that regard. I work closely with the junior high counselor to transition my 6th graders to 7th grade. It takes time, energy, and knowledge to prepare young people to move up a level and help prepare them for what is ahead of them - for academics, post-secondary schooling, for careers, for life. I see myself in partnership with HS counselors. We are all professionally prepared to lead, support, and guide young people. I believe we all face similar challenges...enough time, enough personnel, and adequate support. We – you, me, all of us in this room – are obligated to work together if we are to prepare young people for the next step in their lives. Rather than work against each other, I encourage you to proactively support school counselors and the students they serve by adding more, appropriately trained school counselors to meet the needs that are already here. Certainly our young people are worthy of our investment of time and energy. They are the future. School counselors are ready to meet the challenges. I encourage you to address the real dilemma, not one of school counselor preparedness, that's already in place. Our association is one of many

that provides focused opportunities for professional development for school counselors. Rather I encourage you to address the need of the school counselor to student ratio. Let's get the best trained people to do the job with young people. Trained school counselors. And let's provide focused opportunities for on-going professional development for them. I believe that working cooperatively together, that direction can make the difference for all young people in Michigan. I am in for the long run and I hope you are too. Thank you for making a wise investment on behalf of the young people in our state.